

WASHINGTON, DC – Congressman Steny H. Hoyer (MD-5) led lawmakers in sending a letter to Secretaries of State urging them to oppose new state measures adopted over the last year that would make it harder for eligible voters to register or vote. The letter was signed by 196 House Democrats

“A year from now, millions of Americans will head to the polls to exercise their most fundamental right – the right to vote. Unfortunately, in states across the country, partisan measures have been adopted that would make it more difficult for nearly five million voters, particularly the poor, young people, the elderly, and minorities, to register and vote,” **said Congressman Hoyer.** “Voter suppression has no place in our country. That’s why Democrats are sending a letter to Secretaries of State urging them to oppose these partisan efforts to hinder access to the ballot and urging them to work in a bipartisan way to ensure all Americans can exercise their constitutional right to be heard.”

Below is the text of the letter and the full list of Democrats signing the letter:

Dear Secretary _____

We are writing to you to express our collective concern that the bipartisan consensus and partnership between all levels of government, which for decades has been a central principle of election administration, is deteriorating.

Beginning with the passage of the Voting Rights Act, Congress and election officials across the country have worked on a bipartisan basis to open our democracy to all our citizens. Removing unnecessary barriers to voting was a cause shared across party lines. Sometimes, these efforts were directed at laws and practices that were intentionally created to deny citizens their right to vote. Other times, the laws or practices were relics of a prior era and served no continuing purpose.

As a result of these efforts, the franchise was effectively extended to all our citizens. Age, race, disability, language and military service were no longer impediments to voting. Outdated voting equipment, inaccessible voting sites and living abroad no longer deprived individuals of their right to vote. And these changes were made while putting into place safeguards against fraud.

No progress would have been possible without bipartisan support. There was a shared view that seeking partisan advantage at the expense of fellow citizens' voting rights was fundamentally wrong. It diminished our democracy and undermined its legitimacy.

But a disturbing trend is emerging. Election legislation and administration appear to be increasingly the product of partisan plays. Election officials are seen as partisan combatants, rather than stewards of our democracy. It is critical for our democracy that this does not continue. Voting hours, voting sites, identification requirements, voter registration regulation and access to mail ballots should not be used as weapons to achieve a preferred electoral outcome.

We are asking you, as front line participants in this process, to put partisan considerations aside and serve as advocates for enfranchisement. Critical to your role is the fair presentation and evaluation of the costs and benefits associated with any proposed change in election administration. We ask that you be vigilant in protecting against fraud but equally vigilant in protecting the franchise for all our citizens. History has taught us that our democracy has suffered far more from elected officials who chose to deny some of our citizens the opportunity to vote than from any other cause. There is no greater threat to our democracy than a diminished belief that the rules are fair and fairly administered.

Whether it is an elderly woman unable to locate her birth certificate for purposes of establishing her U.S. citizenship on election day or a college student whose school-issued identification is not among the IDs deemed acceptable for voting or a disabled veteran whose local polling place has not yet been made accessible, public officials on all levels of government should be striving to facilitate their right to vote, not make it more difficult.

We stand willing and ready to work in a bipartisan manner with our Republican counterparts in the U.S. Congress, as well as with state and local officials across the country, to guarantee to every citizen the right to vote and the certainty that every citizen's vote will be counted.

Sincerely,

Steny Hoyer (MD-05)
Robert Brady (PA-01)
John Conyers (MI-14)
John Lewis (GA05)
Emanuel Cleaver (MO-05)
Charles Gonzalez (TX-20)
Judy Chu (CA-32)
Gary Ackerman (NY-05)
Jason Altmire (PA-04)
Robert Andrews (NJ-01)
Joe Baca (CA-43)
Tammy Baldwin (WI-02)
John Barrow (GA-12)
Karen Bass (CA-33)
Xavier Becerra (CA-31)
Shelley Berkley (NV-01)
Howard Berman (CA-28)
Timothy Bishop (NY-01)
Sanford Bishop (GA-02)
Earl Blumenauer (OR-03)
Madeleine Bordallo (GU-00)
Dan Boren (OK-02)
Leonard Boswell (IA-03)
Bruce Braley (IA-01)
Corrine Brown (FL-03)
G. K. Butterfield (NC-01)
Lois Capps (CA-23)
Michael Capuano (MA-08)
Dennis Cardoza (CA-18)
Russ Carnahan (MO-03)
John Carney (DE-AL)
Andre Carson (IN-07)
Kathy Castor (FL-11)
Ben Chandler (KY-06)
Donna Christensen (VI-00)
David Cicilline (RI-01)
Hansen Clarke (MI-13)
Yvette Clarke (NY-11)
Wm. Lacy Clay (MO-01)
James Clyburn (SC-06)
Steve Cohen (TN-09)
Gerry Connolly (VA-11)

Jim Costa (CA-20)
Jerry Costello (IL-12)
Joe Courtney (CT-02)
Mark Critz (PA-12)
Joseph Crowley (NY-07)
Henry Cuellar (TX-28)
Elijah Cummings (MD-07)
Danny Davis (IL-07)
Susan Davis (CA-53)
Peter DeFazio (OR-04)
Diana DeGette (CO-01)
Rosa DeLauro (CT-03)
Ted Deutch (FL-19)
Norman Dicks (WA-06)
John Dingell (MI-15)
Lloyd Doggett (TX-25)
Joe Donnelly (IN-02)
Michael Doyle (PA-14)
Donna Edwards (MD-04)
Keith Ellison (MN-05)
Eliot Engel (NY-17)
Anna Eshoo (CA-14)
Eni Faleomavaega (AS-00)
Sam Farr (CA-17)
Chaka Fattah (PA-02)
Bob Filner (CA-51)
Barney Frank (MA-04)
Marcia Fudge (OH-11)
John Garamendi (CA-10)
Al Green (TX-09)
Gene Green (TX-29)
Raul M. Grijalva (AZ-07)
Luis Guterrez (IL-04)
Janice Hahn (CA-36)
Colleen Hanabusa (HI-01)
Alcee Hastings (FL-23)
Martin Heinrich (NM-01)
Brian Higgins (NY-27)
Jim Himes (CT-04)
Maurice Hinchey (NY-22)
Ruben Hinojosa (TX-15)
Mazie Hirono (HI-02)
Kathy Hochul (NY-26)
Tim Holden (PA-17)
Rush Holt (NJ-12)
Michael Honda (CA-15)

Jay Inslee (WA-01)
Steve Israel (NY-02)
Jesse Jackson (IL-02)
Sheila Jackson-Lee (TX-18)
Eddie Bernice Johnson (TX-30)
Hank Johnson (GA-04)
Marcy Kaptur (OH-09)
William Keating (MA-10)
Dale Kildee (MI-05)
Ron Kind (WI-03)
Larry Kissell (NC-08)
Dennis Kucinich (OH-10)
James Langevin (RI-02)
Rick Larsen (WA-02)
John Larson (CT-01)
Barbara Lee (CA-09)
Sander Levin (MI-12)
Dan Lipinski (IL-03)
Dave Loebsack (IA-02)
Zoe Lofgren (CA-16)
Nita Lowey (NY-18)
Ben Lujan (NM-03)
Stephen Lynch (MA-09)
Carolyn Maloney (NY-14)
Edward Markey (MA-07)
Jim Matheson (UT-02)
Doris Matsui (CA-05)
Carolyn McCarthy (NY-04)
Betty McCollum (MN-04)
Jim McDermott (WA-07)
James McGovern (MA-03)
Mike McIntyre (NC-07)
Jerry McNerney (CA-11)
Gregory Meeks (NY-06)
Michael Michaud (ME-02)
Brad Miller (NC-13)
George Miller (CA-07)
Gwen Moore (WI-04)
James Moran (VA-08)
Chris Murphy (CT-05)
Jerrold Nadler (NY-08)
Grace Napolitano (CA-38)
Richard Neal (MA-02)
Eleanor Holmes Norton (DC-00)
John Olver (MA-01)
Bill Owens (NY-23)

Frank Pallone (NJ-06)
Bill Pascrell (NJ-08)
Ed Pastor (AZ-04)
Donald Payne (NJ-10)
Nancy Pelosi (CA-08)
Ed Perlmutter (CO-07)
Gary Peters (MI-09)
Collin Peterson (MN-07)
Pedro Pierluisi (PR-00)
Chellie Pingree (ME-01)
Jared Polis (CO-02)
David Price (NC-04)
Mike Quigley (IL-05)
Nick Rahall (WV-03)
Charles Rangel (NY-15)
Silvestre Reyes (TX-16)
Laura Richardson (CA-37)
Cedric Richmond (LA-02)
Mike Ross (AR-04)
Steven Rothman (NJ-09)
Lucille Roybal-Allard (CA-34)
C. A. Dutch Ruppersberger (MD-02)
Bobby Rush (IL-01)
Timothy Ryan (OH-17)
Gregorio Sablan (MP-00)
Linda Sanchez (CA-39)
Loretta Sanchez (CA-47)
John Sarbanes (MD-03)
Janice Schakowsky (IL-09)
Adam Schiff (CA-29)
Kurt Schrader (OR-05)
Allyson Schwartz (PA-13)
Robert Scott (VA-03)
David Scott (GA-13)
Jose Serrano (NY-16)
Terri Sewell (AL-07-)
Brad Sherman (CA-27)
Heath Shuler (NC-11)
Albio Sires (NJ-13)
Louise McIntosh Slaughter (NY-28)
Adam Smith (WA-09)
Jackie Speier (CA-12)
Fortney Pete Stark (CA-13)
Betty Sutton (OH-13)
Bennie Thompson (MS02)
Mike Thompson (CA-01)

John Tierney (MA-06)
Paul Tonko (NY-21)
Edolphus Towns (NY-10)
Niki Tsongas (MA-05)
Chris Van Hollen (MD-08)
Nydia Velazquez (NY-12)
Peter Visclosky (IN-01)
Tim Walz (MN-01)
Debbie Wasserman Schultz (FL-20)
Maxine Waters (CA-35)
Melvin Watt (NC-12)
Henry Waxman (CA-30)
Peter Welch (VT-AL)
Frederica Wilson (FL-17)
Lynn Woolsey (CA-06)
John Yarmuth (KY-03)